

The Arab Environment Facility (AEF)

Submission by Lebanon
October 2007

History and Background:

The following statements and events form the reasons and history behind the establishment of the Arab Environment Fund (AEF):

- The World Summit for Sustainable Development (WSSD) held in Johannesburg in the year 2002, issued a plan of implementation which stressed the following points:
 - *“Intraregl coionaordination and cooperation on sustainable development should be improved among the regional commissions, United Nations Funds, programmes and agencies, regional development banks, and other regional and sub-regional institutions and bodies”*
 - *“Assist in the mobilization of technical and financial assistance, and facilitate the provision of adequate financing for the implementation of regionally and sub-regionally agreed sustainable development programmes and projects”*.
- The **“Initiative for Sustainable Development in the Arab Region”** issued by CAMRE, pointed out the need of: *“creating and enabling an environment for new investments in the Arab Region and inviting the international and regional bodies to enhance this increased investment towards the Arab Countries”*.
- The "VIIth Euro-Mediterranean Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs" s held in May 2005, recommended that the Ministers encourage the mobilization of financial resources to support Euro-Mediterranean countries; under the title of: *“Sustainable Economic Development and Reform - Environment and Sustainability”*.

In response to the initiatives mentioned above, and upon the proposal of the Lebanese Ministry of Environment (MOE), the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (CAMRE) decided to initiate the establishment of **An Arab Environment Facility (AEF)** as a framework with the primary purpose of attracting financial resources for environmental programs and projects which improve sustainable ecological development throughout the Arab Region while enhancing private sector investments in the environment.

Progress of Proceedings:

- The Arab Summit in its 18th session held in Khartoum, Sudan 27-29/3/2006 took note of: *“the importance of establishment of the “AEF” to enhance private sector investment and inject resources into the Environmental domain in the Arab Region and called CAMRE to study how to finance the “AEF” and other environmental programmes in the Arab Region”*.

- The Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (CAMRE) in its 18th session, held in Algeria in 19-20/12/2006, “*adopted the Arab Environment Facility - AEF study prepared by the AEF launching secretariat (AEF –LS) - which is hosted by the Republic of Lebanon, the Ministry of Environment- and its by-laws and requested the Chairperson of its Executive Bureau to submit it to the Social & Economical Council in the Arab League for ratification*”.
- The Social & Economical Council in its 80th session held in Egypt, 3-6/9/2007 issued a decision to establish the AEF.
- The AEF was a point of attention in the statement of the World Bank at the 3rd Euro-Mediterranean Environment Ministers’ meeting held in Cairo in 20/11/2006. Not only did the World Bank applaud this important Arab initiative in its keynote address, but also the Italian Minister of Environment welcomed and encouraged the initiative of establishing the “AEF”.
- This support from the Italian Government and the World Bank has attracted international attention to this Arab initiative; whereby, the Global Mechanism (GM), a subsidiary body to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) in Rome - had expressed, its “*full support through the provision of technical and financial contributions for advancing the operationalization of the AEF*” whereby, the AEF launching Secretariat (AEF-LS) signed on August 2007 an aide Memoire on “*Operationalizing the Arab Environment Facility*”.
- The "Union of Arab Banks" which is based in Lebanon approved the hosting of the AEF-LS offices in October 2007.

Future Steps:

Currently, the AEF launching secretariat in collaboration with all existing partners, is planning to:

- Seek the involvement of new partners
- Urge for the undertaking of the preparatory activities towards mobilizing resources for the commencement of the AEF; and
- Face the common and upcoming environmental challenges in the Arab countries